D-20 rejects disputed video

Critics say gay lifestyle is pushed

By BRIAN NEWSOME
THE GAZETTE

Academy School District 20 won't show students a children's music video that conservative groups have denounced for promoting acceptance of gay lifestyles.

The videos are being distributed to schools nationwide and arrived at Pikes Peak-area school districts this week.

The four-minute video features about 100 popular cartoon characters and puppets — including SpongeBob SquarePants, Kermit the Frog, Big Bird and Barney — singing "We Are Family."

MORE ONLINE

- A different version of the video than the one Focus on the Family opposed can be viewed at **www.wearefamilyfoundation.org**
- Teachers guide: **www.adl.org/waff/guide.pdf**

It sparked controversy this year when the American Family Association and Colorado Springs-based Focus on the Family claimed one of the motives behind the singalong was to encourage children to accept homosexuality.

The creator, New York-based We Are Family Foundation, says the video conveys a message of tolerance and diversity, not sexual orientation.

FedEx, a national sponsor of the video, distributed more than 60,000 sets of DVDs and teachers guides nationwide at no cost.

Academy School District 20, which is the district's second-largest district and includes the headquarters of Focus on the Family, does not plan to distribute the DVDs to its 16 elementary schools, district spokeswoman Nanette Anderson said.

Before the video arrived, a "handful" of parents objected to it being shown in school, she said. "We just feel we have character ed programs already in place that address the same goals of tolerance and diversity."

Other districts in the Pikes Peak area have not decided what to do with the video.

Assistant Superintendent Barbara Day of Falcon School District 49 watched the video Monday after about 10 of the DVDs arrived. "Maybe I'm an idiot, but I don't get it," she said. "I saw absolutely nothing objectionable."

The video, she said, will be shown to principals, who will decide whether the video

SEE VIDEO • PAGE 3

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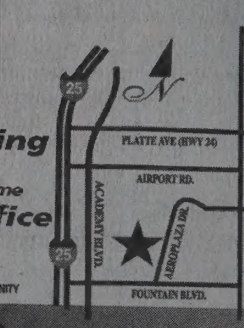

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VIDEO: Watch before judging, Anti-Defamation League says

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would be useful, she said.

The video, which can be viewed online at www.wearefamilyfoundation.org, or the teachers guide, available at www.adl.org/waff/guide.pdf, do not specifically refer to sexual orientation.

Focus issued a statement saying earlier versions of the teachers guide reportedly contained several references to same-sex parents.

"We can only assume the We Are Family Foundation removed those references after realizing the majority of American parents do not want such material to be foisted on their children under the guise of 'tolerance and diversity,'" the ministry said in its statement.

Beth Yohe, associate director of education for the Anti-Defamation League's Mountain States Regional Office, said the league and the producers are letting the video and guide speak for themselves. They hope school districts will not refuse to show the video without watching it.

"We certainly hope that each school district will wait to reserve judgment until they see the actual materials," she said, "which is also the message for the kids — get to know someone before you make a decision about them."

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Jury begins deliberations in d

By DENNIS HUSPENI
THE GAZETTE

A jury must now decide whether Willie Joe Gonzales was merely a negligent baby sitter under whose care a 2-year-old girl fell down the stairs and died, or a murderer who hit her head so hard it killed her.

Defense attorneys and prosecutors made their final arguments in Gonzales' first-degree murder trial Tuesday morning, and the six-man, six-woman jury began deliberations Tuesday afternoon.

If convicted, 22-year-old Gonzales faces life in prison. He's also been charged with child abuse resulting in death.

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